

Message Text

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TAGS: BENC, ECRE, ETRD, UR

SUBJECT: USSR PLANS CANAL BETWEEN OB' TRIBUTARY AND ARAL SEA

1. APRIL 13 TASS VESTNIK ANNOUNCED PRELIMINARY PLANS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF 2,300-KM CANAL BETWEEN IRTYSH RIVER, PRINCIPAL TRIBUTARY OF OB', AND ARAL SEA. CANAL WOULD REACH DEPTH OF 16 METERS AND BED WIDTH OF 300 METERS. CONSTRUCTION WOULD REQUIRE BLASTING ALONG 1000 KM OF CANAL ROUTE. FIRST PHASE WOULD CARRY 25-30 CUBIC KILOMETERS OF WATER PER YEAR, MAKING CANAL ARAL'S THIRD LARGEST SOURCE. COMPLETION WOULD PERMIT IRRIGATION OF MILLIONS OF HECTARES AND HELP REVERSE DECLINE IN ARAL'S LEVEL.

2. GORDON HAWKINS, VICE PRESIDENT OF SPOKANE'S R.A. HANSON CO., TOLD COMOFF LAST WEEK THAT SOVIETS HAVE EXPANDED SCOPE OF THIS MAMMOTH PROJECT STILL FURTHER. WHILE ATTENDING INTERNATIONAL IRRIGATION CONFERENCE IN TASHKENT IN EARLY SEPTEMBER, HAWKINS LEARNED FROM OFFICIALS OF USSR MINISTRY OF LAND RECLAMATION AND WATER RESOURCES THAT CURRENT PLANS CALL FOR DEPTH OF 32 METERS, WIDTH OF 350 METERS AND LENGTH OF 3,000 KM. CONSTRUCTION IS SCHEDULED TO START AROUND 1980 AND TAKE SOME EIGHT YEARS. FOUR-MAN TEAM ORGANIZED BY U.S. BUREAU OF RECLAMATION (INCLUDING R.A. HANSON EXECUTIVE) WILL VISIT USSR NEXT MONTH TO SURVEY PROJECT, AND MINISTRY REQUESTED HAWKINS TO SUBMIT DETAILED ANALYSIS BASED ON FIRM'S EXPERIENCE WITH CALIFORNIA AQUEDUCT.

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3. COMMENT: IRTYSH-ARAL PROJECT OFFERS SIGNIFICANT COMMERCIAL

PROSPECTS TO R.A. HANSON AND OTHER U.S. COMPANIES MANUFACTURING CANAL-

BUILDING EQUIPMENT. AS USUAL, HOWEVER, SOVIETS WANT AS MUCH FREE
ADVICE AS THEY CAN GET IN ADVANCE OF ANY CONTRACT. FOR THIS
REASON HAWKINS BELIEVES HIS FIRM WILL CAREFULLY EXAMINE MINISTRY'S
REQUEST FOR EXPENSIVE STUDY IN LIGHT OF PROSPECTS FOR EVENTUAL
COMMERCIAL PAY-OUT.
MATLOCK

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